

## The Continuing Evolution of the American Return to the Asia-Pacific

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In early January of 2015, the Washington-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) released the policy paper “Pivot 2.0,” which puts forward its recommendations on how the White House and Congress should pursue cooperation over the next two years to strengthen America’s strategic posture in the Asia-Pacific. The report was headed by Michael J. Green, senior vice president for Asia and Japan Chair at CSIS and former senior director for Asia at the National Security Council under George W. Bush, with contributions from Bonnie S. Glaser, former National Security Council staffers Matthew P. Goodman and Victor Cha, former senior China analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency Christopher K. Johnson, and other experts in Asia. Overall, the report’s recommendations are pragmatic, even-handed, and eminently feasible; they merit Taipei’s study. The policy recommendations of “Pivot 2.0” can be summarized as follows:

1. To ensure passage of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) within six months, President Obama should work to manage and facilitate cooperation with the Republican-dominated Congress, build broad public support, and consolidate support within the Democratic Party.
2. As U.S.-China trade relations and economic interdependence continue to deepen, the administration and Congress should work to ensure the stability of policy related to Chinese investment in America. The United States should also expand its interactions with senior officers of the Chinese Communist Party, possibly through the establishment of channels for inter-party dialogues between Chinese apparatchiks and their counterparts in the Republican and Democratic National Committees. The U.S. and China should implement their agreement on rules for safe behavior in military-to-military encounters at sea and in the air. The report further suggests that Chinese participation in the 2016 Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercises, conditional on China’s curtailing of provocative actions, could facilitate increased military-to-military exchanges. The United States should continue to pursue a values-based foreign policy, especially where human rights are concerned. The U.S. should increase its coordination with European nations on Asia-Pacific policy to “sustain a rules-based international order founded on open markets, respect for the rule of law, peaceful resolution of disputes, and free access to the global commons.” Additionally, the United States could join forces with the European Union and Japan to enhance the maritime domain awareness of Southeast Asian littoral states.
3. Previous inconsistent articulation of the aims, ways, and means of U.S. strategy in the Asia-Pacific has resulted in confusion and uncertainty. To avoid further issues of ambiguity, Congress should exercise its prerogative under the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act to request that the Department of Defense submit an Asia strategy report along the lines of the Cold-War-era “East Asian Strategy Reports.”
4. The Korean Peninsula: North Korean nuclear technology may be quickly approaching

or already have crossed a new technology threshold, and Washington needs a full range of contingency plans. North Korea has also stepped up its cyber attacks. The United States should promote better Japan-South Korea relations as U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral relations are the cornerstone of Asian regional stability, not U.S.-China bilateral relations.

5. India's Modi administration and the United States share a relatively strong desire to better align their respective Asia strategies. Defense ties between the two countries have made significant headway in the past decade, and a renewal in 2015 of the 2005 New Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship provides the two countries with a new opportunity for improved defense ties.
6. Obama should closely follow the upcoming elections in Burma and Thailand in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Obama should also follow up on his previous invitation to Indonesia's President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo to visit the United States. Obama can take advantage of his trip to the region for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in the Philippines and the tenth annual East Asia Summit in Malaysia to visit Vietnam.
7. The United States should support the Philippines in its case on maritime jurisdiction in the South China Sea that is currently before the arbitration tribunal established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The United States should rally other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states in support of the Philippines' position, and should aid these states in clarifying their respective legal claims. Where possible, the United States should encourage bilateral negotiations between countries with overlapping claims to the Parcel and Spratly Islands. The United States

should help to improve the maritime domain awareness, patrol, and deterrence capabilities of Southeast Asian countries, including through pushing Philippine implementation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement and through defense training and other exchanges with Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and other states.

The above recommendations, whether related to the TPP, U.S.-China relations, Obama's Asia itinerary, the U.S. position on and action related to the South China Sea dispute, or strengthened U.S.-India cooperation, all pertain closely to Taiwan. Taiwan should hurry to complete work on a new port and the extension of the existing runway on Itu Aba (also known as Taiping Island). In terms of the resolution of maritime disputes according to international law, Taiwan should clarify its own position and prepare a response to the arbitration tribunal's decision, while maintaining communication with the United States. The APEC forums have already provided opportunities for Taipei's presidential envoys to meet with Xi Jinping as well as with the U.S. Secretary of State; Taiwan should strategize to take full advantage of this occasion in future dealings. The Asia-Pacific Rebalance represents a compromise between Washington's pan-Asian and pro-China factions. We should note that recently Southeast Asia has featured more prominently in America's Asia strategy, and that the U.S. seems to be taking an integral approach to the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions. The rebalance emphasizes multilateralism and security, democracy, rule of law, engagement, and human rights, all elements that foreign policy thinking in a post-Ma Taiwan should include. **BT**

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